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SUBJECT: ASSEMBLY BYLAWS UPDATE: DEBATE CONTINUES ON  
SPEAKER'S AUTHORITIES

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT S. FORD, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B)  
AND (D).

¶1. (C) Council of Representatives Deputy Speaker Arif Taifour confirmed to PolOff and PolFSN May 24 that the current impasse on the allocation of authorities between the Speaker and the two Deputies revolves around the question of who will control staff appointments (reftel). He cited the recent appointment of the Council's new Secretary General Amjad al-Douri as a flashpoint in the dispute. According to Taifour, there was an agreement between the Speaker and the Deputy Speakers on the need for consensus on the appointments of directors general (or above). Shortly after al-Douri's name was raised for the secretary general position, Arif Taifour gave his consent, but fellow Deputy Speaker Khalid al-Attiyah asked for two days to consult. The Speaker evidently appointed al-Douri without waiting for al-Attiyah's consent. This appointment has hardened the position of Khalid al-Attiyah and the Shia Coalition on this issue.

¶2. (C) Taifour said that, if the political parties are unable to reach an agreement on the issue of the Speaker's authorities, the Shia Coalition and the Kurdish Alliance may decide to force a vote on the most recent version of the bylaws, which empower the Council of Representatives' Presidency Commission (Speaker and Deputies) to make many decisions, instead of giving exclusive authority to the Speaker. (Comment: Article 10 (Second) states that "The Presidency of the Council of Representatives shall make decisions by consensus. Otherwise, all decisions are made with the agreement of the Speaker and one Deputy. In absence of the Speaker, both Deputies must agree." If the new bylaws had been in effect, in the absence of consensus on al-Douri's hiring, Taifour and Mashadani could have voted to approve his hiring over Attiyah's objections. End Comment) According to Taifour, Mashadani had indicated that he found the bylaws acceptable, but that, because Attiyah is so "extreme", the political leaders will need to decide on the allocation of powers. Taifour added that it is Saleem al-Jabouri (Tawafug member of the Bylaws Committee) who is pushing for the Speaker to have the same powers that Hajim al-Hasani, the Speaker of the Transitional National Assembly (TNA), exercised.

¶3. (C) Shia Coalition and UIC member Iman al-Assadi, a member of the Bylaws Committee, told PolFSN May 24 that the Speaker's authorities was one of the issues discussed by the Shia Coalition's G-7 committee earlier in the day. She did not reveal what they decided, but said it would be announced soon.

¶4. (C) Comment. The Shia Coalition and the Kurdish Alliance do not want the Council of Representatives Speaker to wield the same broad powers enjoyed by his predecessor, Hajim al-Hasani. The flap over the hiring of the new Secretary General has only convinced them of the need for this change.

These parties were willing to cede exclusive authorities to Hajim al-Hasani to ensure his acceptance of the TNA Speaker position and to ensure high-level Sunni Arab participation in the ITG. However, these conditions no longer exist. At the same time, it is important that Council decision-making not be slowed by the need to seek a consensus decision from the Presidency Commission on every issue. End Comment.

KHALILZAD